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Consultation with Children and Young
People with Experience of Domestic
Abuse on The Scottish Government
National Domestic Abuse Delivery
Group Draft Proposals

Summary Report

**CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE
OF DOMESTIC ABUSE
ON
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT NATIONAL
DOMESTIC ABUSE DELIVERY GROUP
DRAFT PROPOSALS**

SUMMARY REPORT

**The University of Edinburgh/NSPCC Centre
for UK-wide Learning in Child Protection
and
Scottish Women's Aid**

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This web only summary report is accompanied by the web only full report "Consultation with Children and Young People with Experience of Domestic Abuse on Scottish Government National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group Draft Proposals".

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1. BACKGROUND	5
2. DESIGN AND STRUCTURE OF THE EVENTS.....	5
3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	5
4. FINDINGS	5
Sessions 1 and 2 – (Proposals 1, 2, 3) - Why adults should listen to us	6
Session 3 – (Proposals 13, 14, 16) – Support I Need.....	7
Session 4 - (Proposals 4, 9, 10) - Help from others	8
Session 5 – (Proposals 15, 8, 11, 7) - Keeping Children Safe	9
Session 6 – (Proposals 5 & 6) - Getting the message out	11
5. CONCLUSIONS: Major Themes	12

1. Background

1.1 This is the summary findings from three consultation events held to consult children and young people with experience of domestic abuse (CYPEDA) on the Scottish Government National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group Draft Proposals. The purpose of the consultation events was to provide a voice to young people in the shaping of the proposals.

1.2 Events were held in October 2007, in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness. Thirty three children and young people aged between 8 and 16, with experience of domestic abuse, took part in the events: a mix of boys and girls; young people from urban and rural areas; and from a range of ethnic origins. Other young people with connections to Women's Aid and who had experience of other consultative events were recruited to assist with the planning and facilitation of the events.

2. Design and Structure of the Events

2.1 The events were organised around the 16 proposals produced by the Scottish Government National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group (NDADG). They were designed to be accessible and age appropriate. There was an emphasis on suitable ways to engage young people, including using pictures, diagrams and graphics.

2.2 The original proposals were translated in advance into a set of 'child-friendly' proposals each based on the original. At the events, the original proposals were shown and used alongside the 'child-friendly' versions of the proposals.

2.3 The events comprised a series of facilitated exercises. Each exercise was organised around one or more of the proposals, around the broad themes of : (1) 'Why adults should listen to us; (2) Support I Need; (3) Help from others; (4) Keeping children safe; (5) Getting the message out, and (6) Why adults should listen to us.

3. Ethical Considerations

3.1 Researchers took account of ethical issues relevant to conducting such events. Central to the consultation was the imperative that CYPEDA would not be further harmed by the process of participating in the consultations. Care was taken about the way participants were accessed; ground rules were set in each group to ensure confidentiality for other young people; issues of consent, confidentiality and child protection were discussed. Consideration was given to putting in place support for young people following the events should they need it.

3.2 Strong themes emerged from the consultation events. These provided practical, valuable input for the work of the NDADG and were taken into account in drafting the final proposals.

4. Findings

Sessions 1 and 2 – (Proposals 1, 2, 3) - Why adults should listen to us

4.1 The first session related to Proposals 1, 2, and 3 and was used to provide explanations to young people about the events, the purpose of the day; and about why their views were important. The second session comprised some ice-breaker exercises with the aim of creating an informal atmosphere where young people could feel relaxed.

Table 1: NDADG Proposals 1, 2, and 3

Proposal number	NDADG Proposals	‘Child-friendly’ text
1	Consolidate information on CYPEDA – a) literature review of research findings especially participation section; and b) evidence both written and oral of CYPEDA views on services. Identify any additional research needs which are necessary for the successful implementation of the other proposals plus other research gaps in this field - to be addressed through analytical programme of delivery plan.	<p>The government is making plans to help people going through domestic abuse.</p> <p>The plans will be better if the government listens to children and young people who have experienced it</p>
2	Engage CYPEDA in the development of delivery plan proposals (this comprises three elements: June 18 representation, Ministerial meeting in September and consultation exercise in October).	<p>The government is making plans to help people going through domestic abuse</p> <p>The plans will be better if the government listens to children and young people who have experienced it</p> <p>Children are good at teaching adults stuff.</p>
3	Longer-term involvement of CYPEDA in the implementation of the delivery plan and in ongoing policy and service design (this has three elements: establishing structures to enable CYPEDA to feed back on the implementation, to contribute to wider DA policy and to be involved with service design, engaging CYP– this includes creating a piece of guidance for services on how to involve CYP).	<p>The government is making plans to help people going through domestic abuse</p> <p>The plans will be better if the government listens to children and young people who have experienced it</p>

4.2 Across the consultations, young people expressed the view that much could be achieved by listening to children and young people. The consultation events themselves demonstrated the commitment of the Scottish Government to ensuring the voices of young people experiencing domestic abuse were heard and taken into account in the shaping of the proposals. The participation of young people at the events demonstrated their willingness and ability to make a meaningful contribution. Young people felt that by listening, adults could better understand the situation they were in and their feelings about it.

Session 3 – (Proposals 13, 14, 16) – Support I Need

4.3 This session involved consulting on the Proposals concerning funding, the use of group work as an effective intervention and young people's views of new technology as a way of improving communication with children experiencing domestic abuse.

Table 2: NDADG Proposals 13, 14 and 16

Proposal number	NDADG Proposals	'Child-friendly' text
13	Secure funding for crisis support beyond March 2008.	It would make things better if children experiencing domestic abuse had their own Children's Support Worker
14	Set up groupwork intervention with children and young people affected by domestic abuse following the model developed in London, Ontario.	It would make things better if children could go to groups with others who have been through domestic abuse and get help in getting over it A group to help mums help children would be good too
16	Consider different forms of communication with CYPEDA, including child friendly website (not obviously badged up as domestic abuse or Scottish Women's Aid), advertised in established credible (cool) sites used by young people. Young people should be able to access by email their own support worker or a central worker who could give local worker contact details. Consider a helpline and text line linked to campaigns/adverts that show all children how to access help and get information (whether experiencing domestic abuse or for help for a friend). Let people know help is out there - non stigmatising, not identified and targeting different age groups.	It would make things better if children and young people could get support in different ways: Websites Emailing a support worker Helpline Textline

4.4 Children’s Support Workers: Respondents valued and recognised the benefits of a Children’s Support Worker focused on them and their needs. Given the difficulties and complexities in their lives (often including, having to move home, change school, issues of fear and concerns about safety), Child Support Workers were seen as trusted and accessible; as a source of information and support.

4.5 Group work opportunities: Overall, opportunities to talk in groups with other young people who may have had similar experiences were seen as potentially beneficial. Notes of caution were also raised. Participants highlighted that young people experiencing domestic abuse are a diverse group. Support should be tailored to them individually. They suggested that before setting up groups, care should be taken to ensure young people are ready to discuss personal issues with others. Guarantees of confidentiality, control over the management of personal information and the need for informed consent were important considerations. The need to be able to access one to one support in addition to groups was also raised.

4.6 New Technology as a way of communicating with young people: Young people appreciated the benefits of new technology as a vehicle for providing support and as an effective means of communicating with young people in this situation. Concern about confidentiality meant that some reported they would find it difficult to trust these communication platforms. Practical difficulties were raised about how to access a telephone phone or computer in a confidential way. In general new technology and phones were less favoured as a means of support than face to face communication.

Session 4 - (Proposals 4, 9, 10) - Help from others

4.7 This section covers findings from the session ‘Help from Others’. The purpose was to examine how public agencies and professionals could best support young people experiencing domestic abuse.

Table 3: NDADG Proposals 4, 9 and 10

Proposal number	NDADG Proposals	‘Child-friendly’ text
4	Create a toolkit for teachers and school staff to enable them to deal with disclosure of domestic abuse.	Teachers need to know how to do the right thing when you tell them about domestic abuse
9	Routine screening for domestic abuse for all attending a health service e.g. A&E, GP, acute care.	Doctors and nurses should ask questions about domestic abuse to encourage mums and children to tell them what is going on

Proposal number	NDADG Proposals	‘Child-friendly’ text
10	Develop a risk assessment tool suitable for all services which assess the risk to the adult victim of the abuse and records the concerns for the child involved.	Adults in lots of different organisations can help to keep children safe where there is domestic abuse They need to know what makes children not safe and what danger signs to look for

4.8 **Teachers:** Young people’s views of the kind of help a teacher might offer to someone experiencing domestic abuse were mixed. Responses suggested that young people’s prior experiences of teachers was key to whether or not they were viewed as a potential source of support or someone to whom they might disclose domestic abuse. Some did see teachers as a potential source of advice and help, but only if they were a particularly ‘good’ teacher. Others reported that they would not talk to a teacher because teachers were not perceived as sympathetic or dependable. Again, there were concerns about trust and confidentiality, and this could prevent disclosure.

4.9 **Other Professionals:** With regard to support from other professionals such as doctors, nurses, social workers and police, young people seemed ambivalent about trusting, approaching and talking to them about their experiences. While the potential help they could give was recognised, there was concern about how information would be handled and this might not be in a way the young person would want. Their prior experiences of contact with professionals in part informed their understanding, current perceptions of and attitudes to decisions about whether or not they were seen as people who could help. Disclosing domestic abuse to a professional risked information being passed on out with their control; something about which young people were extremely wary.

Session 5 – (Proposals 15, 8, 11, 7) - Keeping Children Safe

4.10 In this session the aim was to discuss proposals, on safety, court processes, legal measures concerning access and perpetrator programmes. These were the most difficult of the proposals to consult on. This was partly because of their very personal nature; partly because young people’s views of these matters would be dependent on them having direct experience of them. Because of this, not all participants were involved in these discussions.

Table 4: NDADG Proposals 15, 8 and 11 and 7

Proposal number	NDADG Proposals	‘Child-friendly’ text
15	Improve the accommodation options for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, including appropriate refuges, provisions to remain in own home and the choice of safe social housing.	It would be better if mums and children could stay safely in their own home and violent men leave It would be better if all refuges were like the new model children have recommended
8	Domestic abuse courts: ensure that best practice from the Glasgow pilot court are replicated; develop a toolkit on domestic abuse for sheriffs, criminal justice boards and court practitioners.	It would be good if courts dealt with domestic abuse better It’s a good idea to have special domestic abuse courts
11	Improve contact arrangements between young people and perpetrating parents by a) conducting research and b) reviewing contact centres.	There is a new law to make sure children are safe when they keep in touch with fathers who have been violent and someone should check the new law is working
7	Accredited (and funded) programmes for men who abuse, both court-mandated and non court mandated with integrated services for women and children.	It would be better if there were more programmes to help men change their behaviour and stop being violent

4.11 **Proposals on safety, court procedures, legal measures regarding access, and perpetrator programmes** were the most difficult proposals to consult on. This was partly because of their personal nature and partly because young people’s views seemed dependent on having had direct experience of them.

4.12 **New refuge accommodation:** Young people identified that sharing space in refuges with other families could be difficult; they felt positively about new style refuges. The benefits that refuges afforded included being near other young people with similar experiences. However, this needed to be combined with the need for privacy.

4.13 **Staying at home:** The benefits of there being a genuinely safe option where the perpetrator would move and young people and mothers were able to stay at home and in their local area was recognised as important. However, young people could not conceive of ways in which this could happen safely. Caution was expressed and young people’s support for this would be dependent on this being demonstrated to work in practice.

4.14 **Programmes for men who abuse:** Participants felt that perpetrators should be offered help to change their behaviour. However, programmes needed to be judged on the extent to which they were successful in practice.

4.15 **Court procedures:** For some young people, discussion of court raised complicated issues. Some reported they had felt confused about what was going on at court. A faster, more informed court process would be welcome.

4.16 **Contact arrangements:** Contact was a complicated, emotional issue for some of the young people who were consulted. Contact with perpetrators needed to be safe for young people and their mothers. Proposed developments would be judged on the extent to which they were successful.

Session 6 – (Proposals 5 & 6) - Getting the message out

4.17 This session explored with participants the idea that all children should know that Domestic Abuse is not acceptable and should be prevented. They were asked to consider proposals about the importance of people being involved in the future development of the delivery plan.

Table 5: NDADG Proposals 5 and 6

Proposal number	NDADG Proposals	‘Child-friendly’ text
5	A national public education campaign targeting and engaging children and young people.	It’s important to help all Scotland’s children and young people know that domestic abuse is not OK and how to get help. These are reasons why it is important: to help stop domestic abuse happening in the future; in case they go through it themselves; in case they want to be a good friend to someone who is going through it.
6	Ensure consistency and sustainability of primary prevention education across Scotland through resource mapping, best practice networks and dedicated resource workers.	As above.

4.18 **Involving young people in future development of the delivery plan:** With regard to proposals about consulting young people on the future development of the delivery plan, young people felt this was important because adults do not understand and are not always good at listening. Where young people are given the opportunity to contribute, participants felt they could do so usefully. There was a strong desire among the young people to be listened to.

5. Conclusion: Major Themes:

- There was support in principle from young people for all of the proposals
- Young people gave careful consideration to the proposals and to how they might operate in practice; they expressed some caution about supporting them unreservedly until it was demonstrated they would work in practice
- In relation to all of the proposals young people had concerns about confidentiality and privacy, about the ability to control the flow of personal information, and there were concerns about trust
- Participants expressed the importance of the proposals contributing to young people being and feeling safe

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